

Jonkershoek Nature Reserve, which includes the smaller Assegaibosch Nature Reserve, lies near the town of Stellenbosch in the south western Cape. The Reserve comprises the imposing Jonkershoek mountains and portions of the upper Jonkershoek valley. The Jonkershoek mountains, with their high peaks and deep kloofs, form part of the larger Boland mountain range (part of the greater Hottentots Holland Nature Reserve). The Eerste, Berg, Lourens and Riviersonderend rivers all have their sources high in these mountains, although only the Eerste River actually flows through the Jonkershoek valley. The lower reaches of the valley are a well-known wine-producing area.

Jonkershoek Nature Reserve is 14 527ha in extent and functions as a mountain catchment area, providing water for Stellenbosch and surrounds. Its rugged terrain is ideal for hiking. Assegaibosch, at 204ha, is much smaller and suitable for shorter walks and picnics. Visitors can explore one or both reserves on a single occasion as they are in easy reach of each other. Both Reserves are approximately 9km from Stellenbosch via the Jonkershoek valley road.

Climate

The climate of the Jonkershoek area is fairly typical of the south western Cape. Summers are warm to very hot and strong south-easterly winds prevail, creating a serious fire hazard. The winters are cold, often with gale-force north westerly winds. The mountainous topography has a significant effect on the rainfall, which is of the highest in South Africa. Snow is not unusual on the higher peaks during the winter months.



Hikers should note that at higher altitudes the weather conditions may be quite

different from lower in the valley and can change rapidly, becoming dangerous.

Vegetation

The natural vegetation of the Jonkershoek area is mainly mountain fynbos. More than 1 100 plant species are known to occur, of which a number are rare and/or endemic to the area. Distinctive species are *Protea repens*, *P. neriifolia*, mountain cypress, as well as various ericas and restios. Several relic forest communities occur in narrow, moist kloofs where they are relatively sheltered from fire. Dense riparian vegetation grows along the banks of the Eerste River. Oak trees, although not indigenous, have been allowed to remain in Assegaibosch because of their special historical value. Large pine plantations are a distinctive feature of the valley and occur on property neighbouring the Nature Reserves. The Reserves' management programmes include control of hakea and other invasive alien plants that threaten the fynbos.



Animals

Mammals include leopard, honey badger, baboon, klip-springer, mongoose and numerous smaller animals like mice, shrews and rats. Most of these are shy, however, and seldom seen. Large raptors such as black eagle, the occasional fish eagle and spotted eagle owl occur, while kingfishers and typical fynbos birds (sugarbird, orangebreasted sunbird and protea seed-eater) are more abundant. On warm days rock agama lizards can be seen basking in the sun. Berg adder, puff adder, boomslang and Cape cobra are fairly common and hikers should be alert.



Activities

Assegaibosch has a wild-flower garden that is no longer cultivated but still hosts a wide variety of fynbos species. Visitors are welcome to wander through the garden. It also has three walking trails:

Route A: From the picnic site to the wild flower garden and back, 2.9km, 30-45mins.

Route B: From the picnic site via the junction signs and back, 5.1km, 90mins.

Route C: A circular route from the picnic site, via the wild flower garden and junction signs, back to the picnic site, 5.5km, 90-120mins.

Parking, picnic and braai areas, and toilet facilities are available.

It is an easy walk from Assegaibosch to the conservation station where a fresh-water aquarium and information display are on view during office hours. Visitors can also fish for rainbow trout (best during the winter months) and enjoy light meals at Chaplins Coffeeshop.

Jonkershoek Nature Reserve has a circular drive of ±10km, leading around the valley floor. Five hiking trails of varying difficulty and length lead off the circular drive and up the mountain slopes:

Swartboskloof (18km): This trail leads via Kurktrekkernek to Witbrug. Hikers face a steep 4.5km ascent followed by a fairly level top section with panoramic views and then a steep 2.6km descent down Kurktrekker to join the Tweede Waterval route. Hikers must carry water.

Panorama (17.1km): A fairly steep, 4km ascent onto a contour path, over Dwarsberg Plateau and down Kurktrekker. This trail offers splendid views; hikers must carry water.

Tweede Waterval (8km): A scenic and easy out-and-back option, with the Eerste River in sight for most of the route. The ascent to the gorge is fairly steep; the dangerous ascent to the waterfall is closed to hikers.

Swartboskloof-Sosyskloof (6.9km): An easy and scenic circular route passing through patches of relic forest.

Swartboskloof-Sosyskloof (5.3km): An easy and scenic circular route passing through one patch of relic forest and featuring a waterfall in winter.



Historical buildings

The Assegaibosch farmstead was built in 1790 by Jan Andriessen and the huge old oak trees were planted by Wouter Eduard Wium in 1817. The farm changed hands several times over the years, becoming neglected, until the Cape Provincial Administration purchased it in 1960. It has since been renovated, is now a national monument and used as a guest house.

In 1893 the Colonial Government rented a portion of the estate adjacent to Assegaibosch for the establishment of a trout hatchery. The sturdy, stone hatching house was constructed by John Scott and is now a national monument. Today CapeNature utilises the property as a conservation station.



DISCLAIMER OF LIABILITY

All persons entering this conservation area and using its facilities, do so entirely at their own risk. The Western Cape Nature Conservation Board and/or its employees and/or agents and/or its successors in title shall not be liable for any damage, loss, theft, injury, accident or death suffered by any person, howsoever caused.

Right of Admission Reserved.

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STELLENBOSCH

JONKERSHOEK NATURE RESERVE



BOTHMASKOP
914

JONKERSHOEK
MOUNTAINS



BULLER'S KOP

GROOT DRAKENSTEIN

Skelmhoek



▲ 1287
SPITSKOP

▲ BULKOP
1521

▲ EASTER PEAK
1526

LEGEND

- Start of trails
- Parking
- Picnic Site
- Drinking water
- HIKING TRAILS**
- 1 SWARTBOSKLOOF - SOSYSKLOOF
- 2 SWARTBOSKLOOF
- 3 PANORAMA
- 4 TWEEDE WATERVAL

ASSEGAAIBOSCH NATURE RESERVE

ASSEGAAIBOSCH NATURE RESERVE



LEGEND

- Reserve Boundary
- Roads
- Route A
- Route B
- Route C
- Proposed trail
- Drinking water
- Parking
- Picnic Site
- Start of trails
- Toilets
- Summer house
- Bridge



Protea neriifolia



Cape cobra

JONKERSHOEK NATURE RESERVE

▲ THE TWINS
1494
1504

▲ VIRGIN PEAK
1460

▲ FIRST RIDGE PEAK
1517

▲ BANGHOEK PEAK
1516

▲ GUARDIAN PEAK
1227

▲ DWARSBURG
1523



Kingfisher

Jonkershoek Traverse (to Landdroeskop Hut)
Jonkershoek Traverse (Nuweberg via Boegekloof)